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ABSTRACT

A random sample of 700 current and former continuing education (CE) students were surveyed by mail in May 1992 to identify ways to improve programs and services. Responses from 333 confirmed that CE enrolled a diverse group of students. They chose Ohio State University primarily for its location and program availability. Almost 40 percent of the respondents cited another campus office or department as their source of information about CE. Over 40 percent cited intellectual growth, earning a degree, and learning a specific subject as being very important reasons for return to school. The timing of students' return to school was primarily due to job dissatisfaction, funding availability, and encouragement from others. One-third planned to attend graduate school and were taking prerequisite courses; a substantial number wished to earn an undergraduate degree. Half preferred evening classes and courses that meet twice per week. Overall, students expressed satisfaction with CE programs and services. Over half had stopped or dropped out since beginning their enrollment. Major reasons were as follows: family, financial, or job responsibility; lack of evening courses; scheduling problems; and time constraints. No one student profile emerged. Perhaps the only characteristic most students shared was that they were employed full time. Recommendations were made for the Office of Continuing Education regarding marketing, advocating for students, and providing services. (The instrument is appended.) (YLB)

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ED 362 724

Ohio State Continuing Education: Shaping Its Future

Office of Continuing Education
1992 Student Survey

March 1993

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OHIO STATE CONTINUING EDUCATION: SHAPING ITS FUTURE

1992 Student Study Conducted by the Department of Credit Programs

Office of Continuing Education

Barbara E. Hanniford

Carol A. Ventresca

March 1993

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

The growth in the enrollment of nontraditional students in higher education nationally has been phenomenal during the past two decades. Between 1970 and 1985, enrollment of students under age 25 increased 15 percent, but the comparable figure for students 25 or older was 115 percent (Snyder, 1987). Projections from the National Center for Education Statistics show that by 2002 students 25 or older would account for 41.7 percent of all higher education enrollments (NCES, 1993).

In the context of national trends, growth in adult and nontraditional student enrollments at The Ohio State University is slower. At the Columbus Campus, enrollments of all undergraduate students age 25 or older have remained in the 13-15 percent range of total enrollment over the past several years, although the average student age is gradually rising.

Ohio State's Office of Continuing Education, through its Department of Credit Programs, serves as an undergraduate enrollment unit for adult and nontraditional students. Specifically, Continuing Education enrolls those who wish to take classes but are not currently seeking a degree. Quarterly enrollments have increased over the past decade, peaking in autumn, 1986, at over 2900. However, since then the enrollment has dropped dramatically and currently remains below 1800 quarterly.

Continuing Education staff members have found it difficult to determine the exact cause of this decline. The demographic profile of Continuing Education (CED) students has changed only slightly; thus, the decrease cannot be attributed to any particular sub-groups, and examining existing data has not provided an answer.

Staff members have considered a number of plausible explanations for the decrease. All of these factors occurred within a relatively short period, which makes pinpointing the most important factors difficult. Some factors are due to environmental influences, others stem from institutional policies and practices, and a third group result from office changes beyond the University. Included are the following:

(1) Competition increased. Columbus Technical Institute became a community college and launched an extensive publicity campaign. Otterbein College began its weekend college program.

(2) The University adopted a selective admission policy and a conditional admission policy. University enrollment limitations restricted the extent to which the office could recruit adult students and the availability of spaces for late admissions. Enrollment management practices began to favor reducing the number of undergraduate enrollments.

(3) The University implementing BRUTUS for course registration. Continuing Education students had previously been able to enroll in courses in person by visiting the office.

(4) The number of evening and weekend course sections shrank between 1986 and 1992. This, combined with the closed course problem (or the perception of it), had a negative effect on Continuing Education enrollments.

(5) Tuition has continued to escalate, particularly between 1991 and 1992.

(6) CED students were determined to be ineligible for Pell grants.

(7) Continuing Education's enrollment unit moved to West Campus from a central campus location.

(8) As the Office of Continuing Education's strategic planning efforts began to emphasize program development, student services were revamped. The office instituted an appointment-based counseling schedule rather than a walk-in schedule. Also, Office marketing efforts, which had already been drastically cut in 1983, were further reduced with the elimination of a "mini-master" schedule.

(9) The office made a substantial effort to see that students from other colleges were not "dumped" into CED if they failed to meet the standards required elsewhere. This resulted in an increase in average grades but a decrease in total enrollments.

The enrollment decline is of concern, and the need to understand its causes is apparent. However, this problem is actually one aspect of a broader issue: the need for more information concerning CED students than is available through existing data. Continuing Education staff members want a clearer picture of the students they are serving--the reasons students enroll through Continuing Education, their enrollment patterns, the reasons they may not persist, and their satisfaction with Continuing Education services.

In order to meet this need, the Department of Credit Programs surveyed a random sample of CED students in May, 1992. The remainder of this report presents the study's purposes, methods, and results.

Purpose of the Study

Because the department had not conducted a study of its students in a number of years, this survey was comprehensive. Broad goals for the survey were as follows:

(1) To identify ways to improve programs and services for CED students.

(2) To obtain information to assist the department in its marketing and promotion efforts.

Specific research objectives (in priority order) were:

1. To determine students' use of and satisfaction with services and programs of the Office of Continuing Education.

2. To identify students' patterns of participation (including stopping out, dropping out, and transferring to another enrollment unit).
3. To identify the reasons that students stop out or drop out of Ohio State.
4. To determine students' educational goals and plans for the future.
5. To identify students' unmet needs for Continuing Education programs or services.
6. To identify how students learned of Continuing Education.
7. To assess the importance of various reasons students return to school.
8. To identify the most important reasons that students choose to attend Ohio State.
9. To explore students' scheduling preferences.
10. To gain a better sense of students' overall satisfaction with Ohio State (and/or biggest "pet peeve").
11. To describe students' backgrounds and attendance patterns.

Method

Current and former CED students comprised the study's target population. The sampling frame consisted of individuals who had been enrolled as CED students the fourteenth day of any quarter from Spring 1990 through Winter 1992. Transient students and those registered through the American Language Program were excluded. Over 7,700 students comprised the total sampling frame. A student was included in the data base only once regardless of number of quarters enrolled. Official University data maintained on Continuing Education's Counselor Support System provided the data base from which the sample was drawn. A simple random sample of 700 current and former students was used for this study.

This study was conducted via a mail survey implemented using guidelines suggested by Dillman (1978) to maximize response rate and minimize response errors. The questionnaire had been designed through consulting relevant literature and previous studies and through discussions with Continuing Education staff members. A draft of the questionnaire was then field tested with a small sample of Continuing Education students, who completed both the instrument and a short feedback form. On the basis of this field test, the questionnaire was revised and finalized.

The survey and an accompanying cover letter were mailed on May 1, 1992 (see Appendix A). Cover letters were personally addressed, and the department director signed each one. The surveys were sent via first class mail, and a postage-paid reply envelope was included in order to encourage response. Follow-up efforts included a post card sent to all recipients a week after the initial mailout (see Appendix B) and a second mailing of the questionnaire to all nonrespondents three weeks after the original mailing. Each questionnaire included an identification number that matched the recipient's name on the survey mailing list, thus allowing for follow-up of nonrespondents.

This study was enhanced by the use of archival information from the student data base. Staff with official University clearance to access the data base retrieved specific information, which was added to each respondent's questionnaire data. This archival data included gender, age, date of first enrollment in CED, numbers of quarters enrolled at Ohio State and in CED, most recent enrollment unit, fee status, credit load, grades, and academic problems.

Results

The presentation and discussion of survey results begin with a look at response rate and representativeness. Next, questionnaire results are presented in the order in which topics appeared in the survey. Findings from archival data are covered at the end of the results section of this report.

Significant differences among distinct groups of students are noted for particular questions. Responses were compared by gender (male/female), race (white/non-white), and age group (less than 20, 21-24, 25-28, 29-35, 36-45, and 46 or older). A significance level of .05 was set.

Response rates. By the July 1 cutoff date, 340 recipients had returned questionnaires, although seven surveys were not filled out and were thus unusable. An additional 18 questionnaires had been returned due to bad addresses. Response rates were:

47.6%	total response to all surveys mailed
48.8%	usable responses to all surveys reaching good addresses
49.8%	total response to all surveys reaching good addresses

Representativeness was assessed by comparing selected characteristics of survey respondents with the overall sample or with quarterly student cohorts. Women appear to be overrepresented in the survey; 58.6 percent of survey respondents were female, compared to just 52.4 percent in the sample. Racial representation parallels the overall sample, although white students were slightly overrepresented. The cumulative point-hour ratio of respondents is somewhat higher than the overall CED average, as

is the credit load. However, this might be attributable to the fact that some of the survey respondents are now in graduate school and might be expected to have higher grades and possibly heavier credit loads. It is important to remember that this study sampled two years' worth of students rather than looking at one specific quarterly cohort. Thus, an exact comparison with a cohort's data from one isolated quarter is not possible. Nevertheless, the differences noted mean that we must be cautious in generalizing results to all CED students.

Reasons for choosing Ohio State. Students were asked why they chose to attend Ohio State when they began taking undergraduate courses as an adult. They could indicate as many reasons as were applicable. Table 1 displays the results.

TABLE 1
Reasons for Choosing Ohio State

Topic	Number	Percent of cases	Percent of all responses
Had attended Ohio State previously	116	35.8	11.7
Availability of particular program of study	131	40.4	13.3
Variety of courses offered	87	26.9	8.8
Convenient location	218	67.3	22.1
Academic reputation	85	26.2	8.6
Cost of attending	123	38.0	12.4
Convenient schedule	102	31.5	10.3
Others' recommendations	16	4.9	1.6
Acceptance of transfer credit from another institution	33	10.2	3.3
Employee fee waiver	77	23.8	7.8

NOTE: Respondents were asked to choose as many reasons as were applicable. "Percent of cases" is based on a total of 324 persons who responded to the question. "Percent of responses" is based on a total of 988 responses given.

Respondents cited convenient location most frequently as the reason they chose Ohio State. Other frequently cited responses, in rank order, were the availability of a particular program, cost of attending, previous attendance at Ohio State, and convenient schedule. In written comments, several students noted that the courses they needed for particular graduate programs were available here.

When students were asked which reason was most important, a somewhat different picture emerged. As Table 2 indicates, availability of a particular program ranked first, and convenient location ranked second highest. Ranking third were employee fee waivers, either for Ohio State employees or others whose employers have Ohio State fee authorizations. Course variety and academic reputation, while quite important, were not cited as frequently as we might expect. Those who selected Ohio State because of previous familiarity with the University were much more likely to have a bachelor's degree than those for whom this reason was less important. This points to the likelihood that a number of CED students are Ohio State alumnae, although this question was not asked explicitly. Men and women showed no significant differences in the reasons they cited as being most important. However, significant differences appeared when white and non-white student responses were compared. Convenient location and fee waivers were more important to white students, whereas academic reputation and acceptance of transfer credit were most important to students of color.

TABLE 2
Most Important Reason for Choosing Ohio State

Reason	Rank	Number	Percent of cases
Had attended Ohio State previously	4	37	12.2
Availability of particular program	1	49	16.1
Variety of courses offered	7	18	5.9
Convenient location	2	48	15.8
Academic reputation	6	23	7.6
Cost of attending	5	29	9.5
Convenient schedule	8	16	5.3
Others' recommendation	10	4	1.3
Acceptance of transfer credit	9	15	4.9
Employee fee waiver	3	47	15.5
Other	7	18	5.9
TOTAL		304	100.0

NOTE: Missing cases = 29.

These findings hold obvious marketing implications for the Department. Capitalizing on persons' previous familiarity with Ohio State might be one important strategy. In addition, the need for ongoing internal marketing to Ohio State employees is clear. Marketing efforts might also emphasize program availability at a convenient location and economical price. Student recruitment by the Continuing Education Minority Program might particularly highlight Ohio State's academic reputation.

Information about Continuing Education. How did respondents learn about the Office of Continuing Education? As Table 3 shows, almost 40 percent of the respondents cited another campus office or department as their source of information. In addition, about 10 written comments also mentioned various campus offices or staff members as providing referrals to Continuing Education. Maintaining ongoing communication with campus offices is critical to departmental marketing efforts, given the frequency with which students hear about Continuing Education through this source.

TABLE 3
Information Sources About Continuing Education

Topic	Number	Percent of cases	Percent of all responses
Ohio State Master Schedule	80	27.6	21.9
Another campus office or department	112	38.6	30.7
Employer	29	10.0	7.9
Brochure/advertisement	52	17.9	14.2
Friend or family member	86	29.7	23.6
Presentation or display	6	2.1	1.6

NOTE: Respondents could choose as many responses as were applicable. "Percent of cases" is based on a total of 290 persons who responded to the question. "Percent of responses" is based on a total of 365 responses given.

Survey results also showed that friends or family members were another important information source, as was the Ohio State Master Schedule. Brochures and advertisements, employers, and presentations or displays were much less frequently mentioned. Other written comments mentioned familiarity with Ohio State as being instrumental in locating Continuing

Education. Comparison of survey responses by race and gender showed no significant differences. However, age group comparisons revealed two significant differences. The Master Schedule was an increasingly important information source to older age groups (with popularity peaking with the group aged 36 to 45). Also, brochures were cited by significantly more older students than younger ones.

Motivation for return to school. Respondents were asked what reasons motivated them to take credit courses as an adult student. Table 4 displays the results. Intellectual growth, earning a degree, and learning a specific subject were each cited as being very important by over 40 percent of the respondents. Career-related reasons were also important, particularly entering a new career. Separate cross-tabulation analyses showed that there was some overlap between career reasons, but not a great deal. For example, over a quarter of the respondents cited both advancing in their present careers and meeting job requirements as being very important. A similar number said that career advancement and entering a new career were both very important. Relatively few respondents pointed to social reasons for enrollment; only eight students said that meeting other people was very important to them. Similarly, only a few students were taking courses to get away from the daily routine. In written comments, 11 students said they returned to school in order to earn prerequisites for graduate school. Professional continuing education requirements were important motivators for a few students as well. These survey results parallel findings from other studies of adult college students, which typically show that many students are goal-oriented.

TABLE 4
Reasons for Taking Credit Courses as an Adult Student

Reason	Not Important N	%	Somewhat Important N	%	Important N	%	Very Important N	%
To enter a new career	84	26.8	55	17.6	59	18.8	114	36.4
To advance in my present career	117	36.9	49	15.5	58	18.3	93	29.3
To meet job requirements	174	57.2	42	13.8	43	14.1	45	14.8
To earn a degree	103	32.9	35	11.2	48	15.3	127	40.6
To grow intellectually	27	8.4	35	10.9	120	37.5	138	43.1
To meet other people	159	52.5	87	28.7	49	16.2	8	2.6
To get away from the daily routine	179	59.5	68	22.6	40	13.3	14	4.7
To learn a specific subject	46	14.5	34	10.7	109	34.4	128	40.4
To achieve a sense of identity	166	55.1	59	19.6	46	15.3	30	10.0

NOTE: Percentages are based on the total number of respondents who rated each reason.

Cross-tabulations by race (white/non-white) showed no significant differences in reasons cited. The only significant difference between men's and women's reasons was in the importance of achieving an identity, which was more important to women than men. Age group breakdowns revealed only two significant differences. Students aged 25 through 35 were more likely than any others to return to school in order to enter a new career. Also, meeting job requirements was important or very important to more students over age 35 than to younger ones.

A related question asked about the timing of students' enrollment in credit courses. Aslanian and Brickell (1980) popularized the notion of life transitions as times at which adults return to college, and "trigger events" as instrumental in influencing the timing of reentry. This theory

was not supported as strongly among our study's respondents. As Table 5 shows, specific marker events such as having a child enter school, taking a new job, losing a job, family or marital changes, and moving to a new area had little influence on the timing. Fund availability was the most frequently cited factor, with 31.4 percent naming it as very important and another 30.1 percent as important. As expected, funding availability was more important to those respondents receiving tuition assistance than to others without such assistance. Job dissatisfaction was important or very important to a substantial minority. The third most influential factor was encouragement from others.

TABLE 5
Factors Influencing Timing of Taking Courses

Factor	Not Important		Somewhat Important		Important		Very Important		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Funds were available	75	24.5	43	14.1	92	30.1	96	31.4	306	100
Children entered school	261	90.9	5	1.7	8	2.8	13	4.5	287	100
Took new job	231	79.9	15	5.2	23	8.0	20	6.9	289	100
Moved to area	233	79.8	15	5.1	22	7.5	22	7.5	292	100
Lost job	260	91.5	8	2.8	8	2.8	8	2.8	284	100
Illness or accident	271	94.7	3	1.0	4	1.4	8	2.8	286	100
Encouragement from others	144	48.3	63	21.0	60	20.0	32	10.7	300	100
Family or marital changes	232	80.6	18	6.2	20	6.9	18	6.2	288	100
Job dissatisfaction	148	49.5	37	12.4	47	15.7	67	22.4	299	100

NOTE: Percentages are based on the total number of respondents who rated each factor.

Men's and women's responses differed significantly in three ways: Women were more likely than men to return to college when their children

entered school, when they took a new job, and/or when they received encouragement from others. Moving to the area was a more important motivator for non-white than white students, although it was not a critical timing factor for either group. Several significant differences by age group were found, although no consistent patterns were evident. Funding availability tended to be most important to students aged 25 through 35, for instance. Children entering school was a motivator mainly to students over age 35, and losing a job was meaningful primarily to adults over 45. Job dissatisfaction did not influence the timing of the younger students (those under 25), but was more important to older students. Written comments supported the importance of job factors (including recertification) in influencing the timing of return. Several students mentioned that they enrolled in Continuing Education in order to take summer courses at Ohio State.

Educational plans. Students were asked what their educational plans were when they first enrolled in Continuing Education (Table 6). Although the CED enrollment unit is not officially considered to be for degree-seeking students, in fact almost 20 percent of the respondents planned to transfer into a bachelor's degree program. An additional 7 percent had tentative plans to seek a bachelor's degree, depending upon their success in college. Another 36 percent already had degrees but were taking undergraduate coursework in preparation for graduate or professional school. Relatively few students (16.3 percent) were "casual" students who simply intended to take a few courses but had no plans to pursue a bachelor's or higher degree at Ohio State or elsewhere.

TABLE 6
Educational Plans at Initial Entry into Continuing Education

	Number	Percent
I planned to take just one or a few courses at Ohio State but had no degree plans.	54	16.3
I thought that I might transfer into a bachelor's degree program, depending upon how college was going for me.	23	6.9
I planned to transfer into a degree program and earn a bachelor's degree.	64	19.3
I expected to take some required prerequisites and apply for admission to the Graduate School or a professional school.	119	36.0
I planned to take courses to transfer to another college/ university.	35	10.6
Other.	36	10.9
TOTAL	331	100.0

NOTE: Missing cases = 2.

In written comments, an additional 16 students said they were taking courses in order to maintain professional certification or to complete initial job or certification requirements. Eight students also considered themselves intermittent, casual students, according to their written comments. No significant differences by race or gender were found, but age group differences were apparent. Almost 30 percent of the students over age 35 were enrolled simply to take a few courses, whereas only 10 percent of students younger than 29 were at Ohio State for this purpose. Earning prerequisites for graduate school was important to a greater

proportion of 25-to-28-year-olds than to any other age group. Almost one third of the 21-to-24-year-olds planned to transfer to another institution, compared to fewer than one tenth of other age groups. This study confirms the important role Continuing Education serves in meeting the needs of students who are seeking graduate school prerequisites. It also calls into question the University designation that excludes CED students from being considered degree-seeking.

As Table 7 reveals, most students have not changed their plans. Those most likely to have changed plans were students who thought they might transfer into a degree program. Those who planned to earn a bachelor's degree were least likely to have altered those plans. About a third of those earning prerequisites for graduate school had changed their plans. The most common change in plans (22 students) involved delaying or dropping plans to seek a degree, primarily due to personal circumstances such as pregnancy or job change.

TABLE 7
Have Educational Plans Changed?

	Number	Percent
YES	92	28.0
NO	237	72.0
TOTAL	329	100.0

NOTE: Missing cases = 4.

Fourteen students said that they now have degree plans. Fifteen students said that they had changed plans, but their comments revealed that rather than changing initial plans, they had simply implemented them. Eight students are now attending other colleges or plan to do so. An assortment of other reasons were cited for changing plans, including unhappiness with Continuing Education or the University, changing areas of study, and not being accepted into a program.

Scheduling preferences. Survey respondents were asked three questions related to their course scheduling preferences. Regarding preferred quarterly course load, as Table 8 shows, 43.8 percent want to take just one class, and 30.3 percent wish to take two. This finding fits with archival data which indicated that sample members carried a credit load of 6.792 hours, on average, during their most recent quarter of attendance.

TABLE 8
Preferred Quarterly Course Load

Number of Courses	Number	Percent
One	146	43.8
Two	101	30.3
Three	54	16.2
Four or more	18	5.4
Other	14	4.2
TOTAL	333	100.0

Table 9 displays respondents' preferred course schedule. Exactly half of the students prefer evening classes, and an additional 22.7 percent favor morning. Noon hour and weekend classes are the least preferred

options. Comparing these preferences to CED quarterly mini-enrollment reports shows that more students may have to take daytime classes than would prefer to do so. In a quarterly cohort, about half of all CED students take only daytime courses, but the percentage of this study's respondents favoring morning, noon, or afternoon classes totals just 36.6 percent. Another 6.3 percent have no scheduling preference.

TABLE 9
Preferred Course Schedule

Time of Class	Number	Percent
Morning classes	75	22.7
Classes offered over the noon hour	13	3.9
Afternoon classes	33	10.0
Evening classes	167	50.5
Weekend classes	22	6.6
No preference	21	6.3
TOTAL	331	100.0

NOTE: Missing cases = 2.

Courses that meet twice a week are best for half of the respondents (Table 10). Other students are about equally divided in their preferences for classes that meet once weekly (22.2 percent) or three-four times weekly (20.6 percent). A separate cross-tabulation revealed interactions between preferred meeting times and frequency. For instance, students preferring daytime classes liked to meet three or four times a week (46 percent) or twice weekly (37 percent). Sixty percent of both afternoon and evening students favored classes that meet twice weekly. Thirty

percent of evening students preferred class meetings once a week. Employment status made a difference in student preferences but not as much as might be expected. Employed students were much more likely than others to prefer evening classes; nevertheless, only 56 percent preferred evening. About 20 percent of employed students liked morning classes. Students who were not employed were more evenly distributed throughout the various scheduling options, with morning being the most preferred time.

TABLE 10
Preferred Frequency of Class Meetings

	Number	Percent
Once weekly	73	22.2
Twice weekly	166	50.3
3 or 4 times weekly	68	20.6
5 times weekly	8	2.4
No preference	15	4.5
TOTAL	330	100.0

NOTE: Missing cases = 3.

Satisfaction with Continuing Education. An important portion of the survey focused on student satisfaction with Continuing Education. This was measured through two series of questions. The first asked respondents to rate their satisfaction with a variety of specific Continuing Education programs and services. The second series of questions was designed to assess satisfaction with Continuing Education's quality and accessibility.

Table 11 reports respondent ratings of satisfaction with specific programs and services. Those students who did not use a particular

program or service were asked not to rate it. Most items were rated by a minority of students; for these items, percentages must be viewed with caution. Academic advising was rated by the highest number of students, but even for this service, around 125 respondents did not rate it. Overall, student satisfaction was relatively high, with most mean ratings falling around 3 (somewhat satisfied). The highest means were for DISCOVER's availability (3.310), the CEMP newsletter (3.273), and the Information Center (3.223). Given the generally low usage of the current Information Center, students rating this service might be thinking of information provided in Credit Program's main reception area. Bridge Program course selection (2.860) and CEMP student meetings (2.8) received the lowest ratings. CEMP results created questions concerning inappropriate ratings; most of those who rated different aspects of CEMP were <u>not</u> adults of color. This finding raises questions about the trustworthiness of other ratings, although there were enough "not applicable" responses to believe that most students did not rate programs and services they had not used. Because academic advising availability and quality were rated by substantial numbers of students, responses were compared by race, gender, and age group. No significant differences were found in the satisfaction ratings of availability. Regarding advising quality, however, students of color were significantly more satisfied than white students. Gender and age group did not have significant effects.

Students were also asked their extent of agreement with a series of statements about Continuing Education's quality and accessibility (Table 12). Again, students were not to rate items that were not applicable.

TABLE 11
Satisfaction with Continuing Education Programs & Services

Program or Service	Very Dissatisfied N	%	Somewhat Dissatisfied N	%	Somewhat Satisfied N	%	Very Satisfied N	%	NA/ Missing N	%	Mean
Academic advising:											
Availability	17	8.1	28	13.4	84	40.2	80	38.3	124	41.2	3.086
Quality	15	7.4	34	16.7	74	36.3	81	39.7	129	38.7	3.083
Information Center	10	5.3	17	9.0	82	43.6	79	42.0	145	43.5	3.223
Math Excellence Program	1	6.7	2	13.3	6	40.0	6	40.0	318	95.5	3.133
CE Minority Program:											
MCEOP	1	10.0	1	10.0	6	60.0	2	20.0	323	97.0	2.900
Autumn Open House	1	7.1	1	7.1	8	57.1	4	28.6	319	95.8	3.071
Newsletter	1	4.5	1	4.5	11	50.0	9	40.9	311	94.4	3.273
Student meetings	1	10.0	1	10.0	7	70.0	1	10.0	323	97.0	2.800
Academic advising	4	12.1	4	12.1	13	39.4	12	36.4	300	90.1	3.000
Orientation Program	1	2.9	5	14.7	19	55.9	9	26.5	299	89.8	3.059
Transition Program	5	23.8	2	9.5	9	42.9	5	23.8	312	93.7	2.667
Bridge Program:											
Newsletter	2	7.4	3	11.1	16	59.3	6	22.2	306	91.9	2.963
Course selection	3	7.0	7	16.3	26	60.5	7	16.3	290	87.1	2.860
Academic advising	6	14.0	4	9.3	19	44.2	14	32.6	290	87.1	2.953
DISCOVER:											
Availability	2	6.9	--	--	14	48.3	13	44.8	304	91.3	3.310
Usefulness	1	3.8	4	15.4	13	50.0	8	30.8	307	92.2	3.077

NOTE: Percentages and means are based on the number of respondents who rated that item. When the number who rated a program or service is below 20, percentages should be viewed with caution. Ratings could range from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 4 (very satisfied).

Because of the more general nature of this series of statements, many more students rated items than did so in the previous series of questions. Respondents were generally positive about both the quality and accessibility of Continuing Education. The vast majority agreed or strongly agreed with the positively-worded statements and disagreed with the negative ones. Over 90 percent of the respondents said they would recommend Continuing Education to a friend thinking about returning to school. Other highly positive ratings included feelings that the front desk staff were very helpful and that students received the help they needed to enroll. No aspect of Continuing Education received highly negative ratings. The only three statements in which the average rating fell slightly below 3.0 dealt with satisfaction with counseling, the counseling appointment schedule, and the office's West Campus location. The telephone problems previously experienced by the office seem to have disappeared, and most students believe the office is open at convenient times. The fact that the counseling appointment schedule received a less favorable rating than other aspects seems to support Continuing Education's recent change to an expanded counseling schedule with more walk-in options.

When analyses of variance were conducted by gender, race, and age group, a few significant differences appeared, though none of these differences occurred in male/female comparisons. Age group differences showed that older students were significantly more likely than younger ones to recommend Continuing Education to their friends and to think that the office is conveniently located. Also, 25-to-28-year-olds were the age

TABLE 12
Perceptions About Continuing Education's Quality & Accessibility

Statement	Strongly Disagree N	%	Disagree N	%	Agree N	%	Strongly Agree N	%	NA/ Missing N	%	Mean
I have been satisfied with the counseling I have received from Continuing Education.	12	5.5	39	17.7	119	54.1	50	22.7	113	33.9	2.941
Written information I have received from Continuing Education has <u>not</u> been helpful.	52	21.1	158	64.0	28	11.3	9	3.6	86	25.8	1.976*
I like Continuing Education's counseling appointment schedule.	9	5.1	25	14.0	122	68.5	22	12.4	155	46.5	2.882
I would recommend Continuing Education to a friend thinking about returning to school.	9	2.9	16	5.2	164	52.9	121	39.0	23	6.9	3.281
Continuing Education staff members were <u>not</u> able to help me get answers to my questions.	67	25.1	155	58.1	35	13.1	10	3.7	66	19.8	1.955*
I have received the help I needed from Continuing Education to enroll.	6	2.0	20	6.6	182	60.5	93	30.9	32	9.6	3.203
Continuing Education staff are very familiar with Ohio State policies and procedures.	9	3.1	22	7.6	179	61.7	80	27.6	43	12.9	3.138
Continuing Education staff at the front reception desk have been helpful to me.	5	1.7	24	8.1	176	59.1	93	31.2	35	10.5	3.198
Continuing Education's office is open at convenient times.	4	1.4	30	10.2	185	62.7	76	25.8	38	11.4	3.129
The West Campus location of Continuing Education is convenient.	25	8.8	46	16.1	139	48.8	75	26.3	48	14.4	2.926
The advice I have received from Continuing Education staff was correct.	8	2.9	25	9.0	180	65.0	64	23.1	56	16.8	3.083
Most of the time I am able to reach the Cont. Educ. office by telephone when I call.	3	1.1	20	7.2	190	68.3	65	23.4	55	16.5	3.140
I get the feeling that Continuing Education staff members do <u>not</u> care about me as a person.	84	29.9	156	55.5	30	10.7	11	3.9	52	15.6	1.886*

NOTE: Percentages and means are based on the number of respondents rating a given statement. Any statement marked with an asterisk (*) is a reversed item. Responses could range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

group most likely to feel that they got the help they needed to enroll, to be pleased with Continuing Education's familiarity with Ohio State policies, and to think that front desk staff were helpful. The 21 to 24-year-old respondents were least likely to be positive about these aspects of Continuing Education. Students of color were significantly more favorable than white students toward several aspects. They were more satisfied with the counseling and advice they had received, the appointment schedule, and staff familiarity with Ohio State policy. They were also more likely to say they would recommend Continuing Education to a friend.

An average agreement score for each student was calculated after the reversed (negative) items were first recoded to the same scale as the positive ones. Across all items, scores averaged 3.086, which indicated overall agreement with the series of statements in their positive form. An analysis of variance by race and gender did not show significant differences in average scores. Significant differences were seen between age groups, with 21-to-24-year-olds expressing the least agreement and 36-to-45-year-olds the greatest. A simple correlation between individual age and average score was not significant, however.

Dropout/stopout. Survey respondents tend not to maintain continuous enrollment. As Table 13 shows, 58.5 percent of the respondents said that there were two quarters in a row when they did not take courses. Several cross-tabulations were conducted to determine which groups of students were most likely to stop or drop out. Gender, age group, marital and parental status, race, and type of job held had no significant impact

on the likelihood of dropping or stopping out. Employment status was significant, however. Employment had a positive impact; employed students were significantly less likely to stop out than those who were not working. Among working students, those who worked full-time were the least likely to drop out or stop out.

TABLE 13
Stopout/Dropout (2 Quarters in a Row)

	Number	Percent
NO	135	41.5
YES	190	58.5
TOTAL	325	100.0

NOTE: Missing cases = 8.

When asked why they stopped or dropped out, almost half of the dropouts/stopouts cited job responsibilities (Table 14). Family responsibilities, financial problems, time problems, and lack of evening courses were also important. These findings are consistent with literature on adult students that cites similar explanations for adult students stopping or dropping out. As noted earlier, however, employment and family status did not negatively affect whether or not a student had stopped or dropped out, despite the reasons students say they left school. This incongruity points to a need to know more about what sorts of family and job situations are likely to cause some adult students to drop or stop out. Table 14 shows that 30 students dropped out because

they had accomplished their goal, but this figure may actually be higher because 13 students, in written comments, cited some variation of goal completion as their reason for dropping out. For example, they had earned a degree or were simply enrolled to take one specific course. Nine students said they left the University to attend another college. Eight students cited personal circumstances such as moving or planning a wedding. Five students said they were at Ohio State just for summer courses.

TABLE 14
Factors Influencing Stopout or Dropout

Topic	Number	Percent of cases	Percent of all responses
Financial problems	54	31.6	9.4
Job responsibilities	83	48.5	14.5
Courses too difficult	7	4.1	1.2
Lack of family support	6	3.5	1.0
Family/home responsibilities	57	33.3	10.0
Did not like studying	3	1.8	0.5
Too few other adult students	4	2.3	0.7
Large size of Ohio State	17	9.9	3.0
Lack of evening courses	58	33.9	10.1
Inconvenient evening course schedule	40	23.4	7.0
Lack of weekend courses	32	18.7	5.6
Couldn't get courses desired	63	36.8	11.0
Illness	11	6.4	1.9
Personal problems	24	14.0	4.2
Teaching quality poor	16	9.4	2.8
Time problems	63	36.8	11.0
Accomplished goal	30	17.5	5.2
Problems transferring credits to Ohio State	4	2.3	0.7

NOTE: Respondents could choose as many responses as were applicable. "Percent of cases" is based on a total of 171 persons who responded to the question. "Percent of responses" is based on a total of 572 responses given.

Table 15 provides a look at the most important reasons students left school. Job responsibilities continued to be very influential; 14.3 percent of the respondents ranked this reason first, second, or third in importance. The next most important reasons were inability to get desired courses, time problems, and financial problems. Lack of evening courses was cited by 39 students as a major reason they stopped or dropped out; lack of weekend courses was mentioned by 17. Virtually no respondents named the following reasons as the top three most important: lack of adult students, dislike of studying, problems transferring credits, course difficulty, and lack of family support. Interestingly, students who had experienced academic problems were no more likely to say that courses were difficult or they disliked studying than were other students. The most important reason cited for stopping or dropping out did not differ significantly according to race, gender, or age group.

Comments about Continuing Education and Ohio State. The survey provided several opportunities for respondents to comment about the University. They were asked how Continuing Education could serve them better and what they liked best and worst about Ohio State.

Almost 150 students responded to the question, "Are there any ways in which Continuing Education can serve you better?" Seventeen respondents said that they were satisfied or pleased with Continuing Education services. Overall the office fared well, with many concerns expressed only once. Comments fell into several broad areas: Continuing Education services and counseling, University services and procedures, and course offerings. Regarding Continuing Education services, respondents expressed

TABLE 15
Most Important Reasons for Dropping Out or Stopping Out

Topic	Most Important		Second Most Important		Third Most Important		Ranked 1st, 2nd or 3rd	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Financial problems	19	10.3	20	13.5	5	4.1	44	9.7
Job responsibilities	29	15.7	18	12.2	18	14.9	65	14.3
Courses too difficult	--	--	--	--	3	2.5	3	0.7
Lack of family support	2	1.1	1	0.7	1	0.8	4	0.9
Family/home responsibilities	17	9.2	20	13.5	10	8.3	47	10.4
Did not like studying	1	0.5	--	--	1	0.8	2	0.4
Too few other adult students	--	--	--	--	1	0.8	1	0.2
Large size of Ohio State	3	1.6	5	3.4	2	1.7	10	2.2
Lack of evening courses	13	7.0	18	12.2	8	6.6	39	8.6
Inconvenient evening course schedule	3	1.6	6	4.1	10	8.3	19	4.2
lack of weekend courses	4	2.2	6	4.1	7	5.8	17	3.7
Couldn't get courses desired	15	8.1	15	10.1	15	12.4	45	9.9
Illness	5	2.7	2	1.4	3	2.5	10	2.2
Personal problems	5	2.7	4	2.7	4	3.3	13	2.9
Teaching quality poor	2	1.1	5	3.4	6	5.0	13	2.9
Time problems	11	5.9	15	10.1	19	15.7	45	9.9
Accomplished goal	16	8.6	7	4.7	5	4.1	28	6.2
Problems transferring credits to OSU	1	0.5	--	--	1	0.8	2	0.4
Other	39	21.1	6	4.1	2	1.7	47	10.4
TOTAL	185	100.0	148	100.0	121	100.0	454	100.1

NOTE: Only 185 out of the 190 persons who did not enroll for two consecutive quarters responded to this question.

the following suggestions most often:

* The West Campus location is not as convenient as main campus.

* Continuing Education could provide more marketing and informational materials.

* The office can improve its advising and information regarding various programs into which students may later transfer. Better articulation with the Graduate School was mentioned by several students.

A number of comments actually dealt with University-level issues, including lack of parking, not receiving Master Schedules after dropping out for one quarter, and complaints about teaching skills, particularly with foreign teaching assistants. Another important issue was the need for more evening and weekend courses; over 25 students made comments related to this problem. Other issues included the need for greater variety in course scheduling, problems with the BRUTUS registration procedure (not always perceived as user friendly), and difficulty in dealing with transfer of credits.

When students were asked to name their biggest complaint with Ohio State, the number one problem mentioned was parking! Fifty-six of the 262 comments expressed frustration with Ohio State's parking (or lack thereof, as one respondent put it). Numerous comments also focused on the University's bureaucracy and red tape and its large size. Multiple complaints surfaced regarding academic courses--large class sizes, problems with non-English speaking teaching assistants, closed courses, and faculty quality. Lack of evening and weekend courses or infrequent scheduling of specific courses in the evening caused problems for over 40

students. Several comments related to registration, fees, and financial aid. BRUTUS and the registration process were criticized by a number of students, as was the cost of tuition and fees. A few students expressed negative comments about Continuing Education, suggesting that academic advising is sometimes unhelpful or unnecessary and that the office may have its own bureaucracy.

Respondents also had an opportunity to offer positive feedback in response to the question, "What do you like best about Ohio State?" The most frequently mentioned comment (77 students) dealt with the variety of courses Ohio State offers. Course schedule flexibility was important to 18 students. Positive comments about academic excellence focused on the high standards set in courses, the high quality of teaching, and Ohio State's competent and approachable faculty. (Over 30 students praised teaching quality.) Almost 40 students felt that the University's location was its best feature, and low tuition was important to 21 students. Other frequently-mentioned positives included Ohio State's reputation, diversity, beautiful grounds, and opportunities. A few positive comments about University procedures and services countered some of the negatives above. For instance, five students were complimentary about BRUTUS, and three others mentioned efficient services. A few students cited Continuing Education as cutting through bureaucracy and treating students with respect.

Respondents were given one final opportunity to add any comments about their experiences, and 149 did so. Many of the comments mirrored those stated earlier. Students told of their trials and tribulations! They

left due to closed or lack of courses, low quality teaching, an unfriendly atmosphere, and too much red tape. A number of respondents repeated their need for more evening and weekend courses and programs that can be completed in nontraditional times. The University needs to keep tuition down and financial aid up, according to several students. Many of the service offices are not "user friendly" and accessible. Academic advisors are not always as helpful or knowledgeable as students expected. Students commented on Continuing Education as well, complimenting us on cutting red tape. But we are not perfect either. We need to improve our understanding of prerequisites to help students transfer into undergraduate or graduate programs. Counseling can be better and more clear, and more Bridge courses could be of benefit. Students need to know more about what Continuing Education offers. They were divided in their opinions regarding the West Campus location and parking situation.

A sampling of comments gives a flavor of both the positive and the negative feedback students expressed. Many comments were positive:

> OSU is a huge bureaucracy, and the Continuing Education office is one of the few sane places on campus. I think OSU should give adult part time students priority when scheduling evening and weekend courses...
>
> I was surprised and happy when I received the questionnaire because it shows that Continuing Education cares about the students. Ohio State University has shaped me in some good ways...
>
> I have been very impressed by OSU. All my other experiences with higher education have been in much smaller schools (100-2000 students) and the size of OSU intimidated me, but I found OSU to be very "user friendly." What a surprise.

Originally, I came to Continuing Education as a way to get needed credits/experience for graduate school. After getting my master's approximately 10 years ago, I recently took two courses in a totally unrelated area for the experience (for freelance work I do and a possible future career change) and academic challenge. It has been most rewarding!

Continuing Education is a readily available and convenient way to pick up a course here and there "for the intrinsic value of learning" or "for fun!" Thanks.

I love Ohio State! It seems that I have never left it. I have earned one undergraduate degree, an elementary teaching certificate and a master's degree. I took courses all during my teaching career of 25 years. Now I have retired and look forward to widening my experiences and enjoyment of life by attending OSU much more. OSU has been the single most important element in my life and the most consistent. I pray that it will always remain an institution of the highest caliber, to be a beacon of guidance and hope for a better life for all who attend.

However, students felt also free to express dissatisfaction:

When a student needs academic counseling, set appointments with someone who understands the specific requirements of their program/major. I never received proper advice; I was not misguided, but told stuff like "I'm not sure about that -- check with someone else,", etc.

I would love to, just once, get truthful advice from an advisor as to what are the necessary requirements for a specific degree or have a professor who enjoys teaching more than having me buy the book they just wrote or have someone be helpful at a front desk rather than push me around to someone else.

This university offers too many low level (non credit) courses. President Gee should stop trying to "con" the public (e.g. we are going to make parking better for the students -- results bus service cut & C sticker spaces reduction). This leads me to say, "Don't do me any more favors" (e.g. we are going to have more selective admissions -- a good coverup for declining enrollment at OSU). The fact is, with fees going up and parking facilities becoming poorer you may lose your over 30 age students and with them more lost tax support and lost business support. Maybe that is the intention when the education college encourages enrollment at other universities. If not, it is time for President Gee to wake up and smell the coffee.

Demographic characteristics of respondents. The questionnaire contained several questions to solicit demographic or background information. One series of questions dealt with employment information. As Table 16 shows, 83 percent of respondents were employed. Men were significantly more likely to be employed than women, as were white respondents in comparison to non-white. Age group comparisons also showed significant differences, with younger students less likely to be employed than older ones, with the exception of the oldest age group (students over 45). Of the employed respondents, most (77.3 percent) worked full time, and an additional 14.1 percent worked more than half time (Table 17). Table 18 reveals that over half of the employed respondents held professional positions such as teachers, engineers, or social workers. Another 18.8 percent were in support positions such as secretary or administrative assistant. No other position category included more than 10 percent of the respondents.

TABLE 16
Employment Status

	Number	Percent
YES	274	83.0
NO	56	17.0
TOTAL	330	100.0

NOTE: Missing cases = 3.

TABLE 17
Hours Worked Weekly

Number of hours	Number	Percent
One to ten	6	2.2
Eleven to twenty	17	6.3
Twenty-one to thirty-five	38	14.1
Thirty-six or more	208	77.3
TOTAL	269	100.0

NOTE: Missing cases = 5. Only the 274 students who were employed were asked to respond to this question.

TABLE 18
Position Title

	Number	Percent
Manager	16	6.4
Manager-related	1	0.4
Professional	130	52.0
Sales	18	7.2
Service	14	5.6
Support	47	18.8
Technical	14	5.6
Other	7	2.8
Own Business	3	1.2
TOTAL	250	100.0

NOTE: Missing cases = 24. Only the 274 persons who were employed were asked to respond to this question.

Finally, as Table 19 shows, over half the employed respondents received tuition benefits from their employers. Separate analyses showed that only 21 percent of part-time employees had such benefits, compared with 60 percent of full-time workers. Also, older students were significantly more likely to be working for companies with tuition benefits than younger students. Men were significantly more likely than women to have tuition assistance. No significant difference by race was seen. Given the number of students receiving tuition benefits, directing marketing efforts to firms with tuition assistance programs might prove to be effective. Continuing to recruit University employees is clearly a wise strategy as well.

TABLE 19
Tuition Partially or Fully Paid by Employer

	Number	Percent
YES	138	51.1
NO	132	48.9
TOTAL	270	100.0

NOTE: Missing cases = 19. Only the 274 persons who were employed were asked to respond to this question.

The respondent group was about equally split between married and single students, as seen in Table 20. Gender and race had no effect on marital status, but older students were significantly more likely to be married than young ones.

TABLE 20
Marital Status

	Number	Percent
Single (including divorced, separated, or widowed)	171	52.0
Married or living with a partner	158	48.0
TOTAL	329	100.0

NOTE: Missing cases = 4.

Over three quarters of the respondents did not have children under age 18 living at home (Table 21). As might be expected, there were significant age group differences, with older age groups (excluding students over 45) more likely to have children at home. Race and gender had no significant effects.

TABLE 21
Children Under Age 18 Living at Home

	Number	Percent
YES	75	22.7
NO	256	77.3
TOTAL	331	100.0

NOTE: Missing cases = 2.

Continuing Education students are a highly educated group, as Table 22 shows. Over 60 percent of the respondents reported having at least a bachelor's degree. Very few students said that they entered Continuing Education with just a high school diploma or GED. This finding supports an earlier one regarding educational plans in which it was noted that many CED students are seeking prerequisites for graduate school. These student characteristics affect the way in which the department should market programs and serves students. Although the image of a Continuing Education student as a reentry undergraduate clearly fits some students, more than one student profile prevails. Educational levels did not differ significantly by race, but they did by gender and age group. Men had higher levels of education than did women. A mixed pattern occurs by age group, with the most highly educated students coming from the 25-to-28-year-old group (78 percent hold at least a bachelor's degree). The oldest age group (students over 45) is least likely to have an undergraduate degree.

TABLE 22
Educational Level When Entered Continuing Education

	Number	Percent
High school diploma or GED	24	7.3
Associate or technical degree	19	5.7
Some college, no degree	83	25.1
Bachelor's degree	143	43.2
Graduate coursework	22	6.6
Graduate or professional degree	40	12.1
TOTAL	331	100.0

NOTE: Missing cases = 2.

Continuing Education serves a predominantly white student population, as Table 23 shows, although 13 percent of the respondents were non-white. It may be misleading to compare these findings with regular quarterly enrollment data because of the large amount of missing data on race in the student data base. As mentioned earlier, white students may be slightly overrepresented in the respondent group.

TABLE 23
Racial/Ethnic Status

	Number	Percent
Black; African American	17	5.2
Native American	2	0.6
Asian American	10	3.1
Hispanic	4	1.2
White; Caucasian	282	87.0
Other	9	2.8
TOTAL	324	100.0

NOTE: Missing cases = 9.

Archival information. Using the student data base, Continuing Education staff members gathered archival information on each respondent to enlarge our understanding of student attendance history and academic success. Tables 24-34 (shown at the conclusion of this section) present these results. From these tables, we glean the following insights about the respondent group:

* The largest percentage of respondents were ages 29 to 35, as Table 25 shows. Very few students were in the youngest age group, ages 19 to 20. Ages ranged from 19 to 74, with the average respondent age being 32.55.

* Over half the respondents had been enrolled at Ohio State eight or fewer quarters, although 15.7 percent had been enrolled over 20 quarters. The average number of quarters enrolled is 10.5. One student actually had 65 quarters of Ohio State enrollment! (Table 25)

* About 9 percent of the students ended up withdrawing from Ohio State the last quarter in which they were enrolled and had paid fees. (Table 26)

* The earliest CED enrollments among this group date to 1966. However, most students had enrolled more recently--42.7 percent in 1991. The average number of quarters of CED enrollment (including quarters of course withdrawal) was 3.922. (Tables 27 and 28)

* About 70 percent of the respondents were enrolled at Ohio State during the 1991-92 academic year, but only about 43 percent were enrolled summer and/or spring quarters, when the survey was conducted. A few respondents were included in the sample, although they did not hold fee status 1 or 2 during the period from which the sample was drawn. They had apparently registered for class but never paid fees. (Table 29)

* A look at students' most recent college of enrollment shows that almost 80 percent of the respondents had been enrolled in Continuing Education last. The remainder were distributed throughout other enrollment units across the University, with the Graduate School claiming the largest share (8.1 percent). The College of Business and the Colleges of the Arts and Sciences each had 3 percent of former CED students. (Table 30)

* In terms of academic success, the cumulative point-hour ratio for this group of respondents was 3.016. This is somewhat higher than that of a typical CED quarterly cohort, possibly due to the nature of the sample. Because a number of respondents are now enrolled in the Graduate School, their grades might be somewhat higher than other students' and thus push up the overall average. Thirty-seven respondents (11.2 percent) had academic problems since Winter 1990 serious enough to warrant probation, warning, or dismissal. Survey respondents took an average of 6.792 hours the last quarter in which they were enrolled at Ohio State. The number of hours they successfully completed was somewhat smaller (average of 6.578). (Tables 31-33)

Table 24
Age Distribution

Age Group	Number	Percent
19-20	5	1.5
21-24	47	14.2
25-28	81	24.4
29-35	100	30.1
36-45	66	19.9
46 or older	33	9.9
TOTAL	332	100.0

NOTE: Missing cases = 1. Average age is 32.55. Ages ranged from 19 to 74.

TABLE 25
Total Number of Quarters at Ohio State

Number of Quarters	Number	Percent
0	2	0.6
1 - 4	129	39.0
5 - 8	56	16.9
9 - 12	27	8.2
13 - 16	35	10.6
17 - 20	30	9.0
over 20	52	15.7
TOTAL	331	100.0

NOTE: Missing cases = 2., Number of quarters enrolled includes fee status 2 (withdrew) quarters. The average number of quarters enrolled is 10.5.

TABLE 26
Fee Status for Last Quarter Enrolled at Ohio State

Status	Number	Percent
1 (Paid and Attended)	299	90.9
2 (Paid and Withdrawn)	30	9.1
TOTAL	329	100.0

NOTE: Missing cases = 4.

TABLE 27
Initial Year in Continuing Education

Year	Number	Percent
1966-1979	11	3.3
1980-1985	32	9.7
1986	10	3.0
1987	10	3.0
1988	11	3.3
1989	31	9.4
1990	52	15.8
1991	141	42.7
1992	32	9.7
TOTAL	330	100.0

NOTE: Missing cases = 3.

TABLE 28
Total Number of Quarters in CED

Number of Quarters	Number	Percent
0	12	3.6
1	85	25.5
2	56	16.8
3	39	11.7
4	45	13.5
5	23	6.9
6	18	5.4
7	15	4.5
8	8	2.4
9	8	2.4
10	7	2.1
11	3	0.9
13	6	1.8
14	2	0.6
18	2	0.6
20	2	0.6
25	1	0.3
38	1	0.3
TOTAL	333	100.0

NOTE: Number of quarters in CED in which fee status was 1 (paid and attended) or 2 (paid and withdrew). Average number of quarters in CED was 3.922.

TABLE 29
Last Quarter Enrolled at OSU

Quarter	Number	Percent
AU82	1	0.3
AU87	2	0.6
SP90	2	0.6
SU90	4	1.2
AU90	8	2.4
WI91	21	6.3
SP91	22	6.6
SU91	35	10.6
AU91	49	14.7
WI92	40	12.0
SP92	78	23.4
SU92	68	20.4
Fees never paid	3	0.9
TOTAL	333	100.0

NOTE: Last quarter of enrollment in which fee status was 1 (paid and attended) or 2 (paid and withdrew). Three students never actually paid fees.

TABLE 30
Most Recent College of Enrollment

College	Number	Percent
Missing	2	0.6
AGR	2	0.6
AMP	1	0.3
ASC	10	3.0
BUS	10	3.0
CED	262	78.7
EDP	3	0.9
EDU	2	0.6
ENG	1	0.3
GRD	27	8.1
JUR	1	0.3
NRE	1	0.3
NUR	2	0.6
OPT	1	0.3
PHR	2	0.6
UVC	5	1.5
VME	1	0.3
TOTAL	333	100.0

NOTE: Most recent college of enrollment in which fee status was 1 or 2.

TABLE 31
Cumulative Point-Hour Ratio

Mean	3.016
Minimum	0.000
Maximum	4.000
Median	3.060
Variance	0.534

TABLE 32
Academic Probations, Warnings, Dismissals
Winter 1990 - Summer 1992

		Number	Percent
YES		37	11.2
NO		292	88.8
	TOTAL	329	100.0

NOTE: Missing cases = 4.

TABLE 33
Hours Attempted Last Quarter Enrolled at Ohio State

Number of Hours	Number	Percent
1	14	4.3
2	7	2.1
3	45	13.8
4	31	9.5
5	109	33.3
6	9	2.8
7	9	2.8
8	12	3.7
9	10	3.1
10	26	8.0
11	5	1.5
12	4	1.2
13	5	1.5
14	5	1.5
15	16	4.9
16	5	1.5
17	7	2.1
18	4	1.2
19	3	0.9
20	1	0.3
TOTAL	327	100.0

NOTE: The last quarter enrolled at OSU in which fee status was 1 (paid and attended). The average was 6.792 hours.

TABLE 34
Hours Successfully Completed the Last Quarter Enrolled at Ohio State

Number of Hours		Number	Percent
0		5	1.5
1		14	4.3
2		7	2.1
3		46	14.1
4		31	9.5
5		110	33.6
6		7	2.1
7		8	2.4
8		12	3.7
9		10	3.1
10		25	7.6
11		4	1.2
12		4	1.2
13		7	2.1
14		5	1.5
15		14	4.3
16		4	1.2
17		7	2.1
18		3	0.9
19		3	0.9
20		1	0.3
	TOTAL	327	100.0

NOTE: Hours completed in which fee status was 1 (paid and attended).
Average number completed successfully was 6.578.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The survey yielded a wealth of information about Continuing Education students. Staff members now have an improved understanding of the students being served through this enrollment unit. We know more who our students are, what draws them to the University and to Continuing Education, and how they view us. As we work to attract new students and serve them effectively, this information is vital.

The enrollment of adult students at Ohio State continues to lag behind national figures. At the University level, this population segment has not been viewed as a marketing target. At the office level, marketing efforts have been minimal for several years. Although we cannot set University recruitment priorities, we can use information gleaned from this survey to define our target audience better and to refine our own marketing strategies.

Survey responses confirm that Continuing Education enrolls a diverse group of students. No one student profile emerged from the data. Perhaps the only characteristic most students share is that they are employed full-time. Although this would seem to suggest something about their class scheduling preferences, in fact even these are diverse. Many students prefer evening classes, but a number favor attending in the daytime. And, contrary to expectations, only a fifth of the respondents prefer classes that meet just once a week.

Some on campus may perceive Continuing Education as an entry point for returning adult students to begin or complete degrees. Others may see Continuing Education as a place for the casual student - someone who drops

in and drops out to take an occasional course. Both these perceptions are accurate, as are several others. Fully a third of Continuing Education students are here because they plan to attend graduate school and are taking prerequisite courses. A substantial number eventually wish to earn an undergraduate degree. The casual student is in the minority. However, even the casual student can be very goal-directed. For example, a number of teachers and other professionals enroll through Continuing Education to earn credits required for maintaining certification. In general, students do not tend to change their plans, and they are more likely to be enrolled for goal-oriented reasons than for personal or social betterment. Continuing Education students are also highly educated. Few faculty or staff on campus may realize the extent to which Continuing Education serves adults who already hold undergraduate degrees. In this survey sample, degree-holders actually outnumber those without a degree.

Academically, Continuing Education students do quite well. The cumulative point-hour ratio exceeds that of their more traditional counterparts. A minority of students have had serious academic problems.

Students chose Ohio State primarily for its location and program availability. Employee fee waivers also influence a number of students to enroll. Previous familiarity with Ohio State was an important factor as well; this finding, coupled with other survey data, suggests that the office benefits from an alumni connection. Although the University's academic reputation is important, it is not a primary motivator for most students.

The timing of students' return to school was primarily due to job dissatisfaction, funding availability, and encouragement from others. Once they decided to return, over a third of the respondents heard about Continuing Education through another campus office. Friends were another important source of information.

The image of Continuing Education students attending intermittently is accurate. Over half of the students had stopped out or dropped out since beginning their enrollment. Goal attainment was not a major reason for dropout. Rather, other factors such as family, financial, or job responsibilities; lack of evening courses; scheduling problems; and time constraints were cited. Some of these factors are beyond the University's control, although there may be ways in which we can help students balance these external demands with their student role. Others, such as a need for evening courses, could be responded to more directly.

Overall, students expressed satisfaction with Continuing Education programs and services. The vast majority said they would recommend Continuing Education to a friend thinking about returning to school. Some suggestions that emerged included having more available counseling time, improved information about graduate programs and prerequisites, less red tape, and scheduling information when students had dropped out. Also, the location of Continuing Education was not seen as very convenient.

Students had many positive things to say about the University. They particularly liked the variety Ohio State offers and the quality of instruction. Their negative feedback revolved around parking, more scheduling options, the lack of evening courses, class size, and red

tape. Several suggested that the University needs to do more to publicize its services for adult students.

Out of the survey results come a number of recommendations for the Office of Continuing Education regarding marketing, advocating for students, and providing services.

(1) The office needs to make a concerted effort to develop and implement a marketing plan. Students need scheduling/registration information, reminders of the quarterly dates, and program information. We might take a closer look at information in the Master Schedule and think of it partially as a promotional piece.

(2) Marketing efforts might be targeted at groups with fee waivers or tuition assistance, previous familiarity with Ohio State, and those who live in the campus vicinity. Ohio State employees and alumni are groups to whom marketing efforts should definitely be directed. Persons who might be seeking graduate prerequisites are another market niche, if they can be identified.

(3) Companies with tuition assistance programs should be identified and approached with promotional materials and information. Also, we might consider recruiting directly with employers so that they can help their employees to be successful. A liaison-type program similar to MCEOP might be one possibility.

(4) Marketing efforts should point out the variety of programs Ohio State offers and mention the economical cost. Promotional efforts aimed at students of color might also emphasize Ohio State's academic reputation and acceptance of transfer credit.

(5) Internal marketing is critical. Opportunities must be found to maintain visibility among faculty and staff on campus, inasmuch as many referrals come from other campus offices. Marketing to other counselors at Ohio State should prove helpful.

(6) Marketing materials might emphasize "instrumental" reasons for enrolling. Earning a degree, learning a specific subject, advancing in a career, or entering a new field are all important motivators to our adult students. However, intellectual growth should not be downplayed; it was important to many students.

(7) A number of Continuing Education students enroll in order to meet certification or licensure requirements. A better knowledge of these requirements and ways in which we might help students meet them is helpful and might be promoted in publicity. Older students, in particular, are more likely to enroll to meet job requirements. For younger students, enrollment in Continuing Education is often aimed at helping them enter a new career.

(8) The office's designation as non-degree by the University should be changed inasmuch as many students are actually planning to earn a degree. This would give CED students access to financial aid that they currently do not have.

(9) We should seek opportunities to advocate on behalf of adult students. Working toward more evening classes and extended office schedules would be good initial goals. Distributing summaries of this study may be one form of advocacy.

(10) Academic advisers need to be as familiar as possible with the variety of graduate programs offered at Ohio State and the requirements for entry. A better linkage with the Graduate School might be helpful, as might curriculum information exchanges with many graduate programs.

(11) Because encouragement of others is an important motivator in returning to college (and literature on persistence shows it is important to retention as well), we might consider ways to cultivate this in our services and information to students.

(12) When comparing what course schedule students prefer and what they actually take (using the mini-enrollment report), we see some discrepancy. It might be wise to examine in greater detail the courses most heavily enrolled to see if they are offered in the daytime or evening.

(13) Bridge course selection should be carefully considered so that newly-recruited students have beginning courses regularly available. Also, information about upcoming Bridge courses must be sent out in a timely manner.

(14) The need for ongoing information about Continuing Education students is apparent. Full-scale surveys cannot be conducted frequently, but other means of learning more about students and gathering feedback about our office should be considered. Short information forms completed by incoming students (as we are currently using) or focus groups might be used. Program-specific studies may also be considered.

This study's original goals were to obtain information that would lead to improved programs, services, and marketing. By gaining a better understanding of Continuing Education students, staff members have been able to develop a number of marketing strategies for future implementation. Suggestions have also emerged for meeting the counseling needs of students more effectively. Feedback about specific programs was sparser, although continued sifting through written comments may yield additional insights. It may be beneficial to conduct program-specific studies in the future to gain more in-depth input. The survey has also provided information that can be used to consider the relative impact of the various factors influencing Continuing Education enrollment and focus on specific issues. Given the wealth of quantitative and qualitative information generated through the survey, staff members will continue to find useful suggestions for recruiting and serving students in the future.

References

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APPENDIX A

Cover Letter and Questionnaire

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Office of Continuing Education
Department of Credit Programs

152 Mount Hall
1050 Carmack Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1002

Phone 614-292-8860
FAX 614-292-0492

May 1, 1992

As you know, the Office of Continuing Education, Department of Credit Programs at Ohio State enrolls adult and nontraditional students who want to take undergraduate courses. Because you have been a Continuing Education student, your opinion is important to us as we work to serve students better. The best way we know to improve our services is to ask current and former students for feedback about Continuing Education and the University.

You are one of a random sample of our current and former students we are asking for opinions on your experiences as a Continuing Education student. Your participation in the enclosed survey is voluntary. Completing the survey will take you between 15 and 20 minutes. For the results to be representative, your returned questionnaire is important. Your viewpoints really matter to us, and we hope you will share them.

Questionnaire responses will be kept anonymous. The identification number on the questionnaire will allow us to check your name off of the mailing list when you return it. We will not place your name on the questionnaire, and we will destroy our mailing list when follow-up is complete.

We will use the results of this study to help improve services and programs for Continuing Education students. You may receive a summary of results by writing your name and address on the back of the return envelope. Please do not put this information on the questionnaire itself. The deadline for survey return is May 22.

I would be most happy to answer any questions you might have. Please write to me or call; my address and telephone number are above.

We look forward to having you help to shape the future of Continuing Education at Ohio State. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Anthony Basil

Anthony Basil
Director

Enclosure

Q-[redacted]Wha[redacted]ur ra[redacted]hnic[redacted]?

1 Black; African American
2 Native American
3 Asian American
4 Hispanic
5 White; Caucasian
6 Other_____

Please use the space below to add any comments about this questionnaire or your experiences at Ohio State.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your help.

Return by May 22 to:
Office of Continuing Education, Department of Credit Programs
152 Mount Hall, 1050 Carmack Road, Columbus, Ohio 43210.

OHIO STATE CONTINUING EDUCATION:

SHAPING ITS FUTURE

The Office of Continuing Education at Ohio State wants to serve its students as effectively as possible.

Your input is crucial to us as we evaluate our programs and services and plan for the future.

Your responses will be anonymous.

If you wish to comment on any question, feel free to write in the margins.

T · H · E
OHIO
STATE
UNIVERSITY

Q-1 When you began taking undergraduate courses as an adult, why did you choose Ohio State? *(Circle the numbers of all responses that apply)*

1 Had attended Ohio State previously
2 Availability of particular program of study
3 Variety of courses offered
4 Convenient location
5 Academic reputation
6 Cost of attending
7 Convenient schedule
8 Others' recommendations
9 Acceptance of transfer credit from another institution
10 Employee fee waiver
11 Other_____

Which one reason was most important? ☐ (use number from above)

Q-2 How did you learn about the Office of Continuing Education? *(Circle all responses that apply)*

1 Ohio State master schedule
2 Another campus office or department
3 Employer
4 Brochure/advertisement
5 Friend or family member
6 Presentation or display
7 Other_____

Q-3 Adults take undergraduate courses for many different reasons. How important to you were each of the following reasons for taking credit courses as an adult student? *(Circle the number of each response)*

Importance of reason:	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important
To enter a new career	1	2	3	4
To advance in my present career	1	2	3	4
To meet job requirements	1	2	3	4
To earn a degree	1	2	3	4
To grow intellectually	1	2	3	4
To meet other people	1	2	3	4
To get away from the daily routine	1	2	3	4
To learn a specific subject	1	2	3	4
To achieve a sense of identity	1	2	3	4
Other _____	1	2	3	4

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Q-4 How important were each of the following factors in influencing your timing in taking credit courses at Ohio State as an adult? *(Circle number of each response)*

Importance of reason:	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important
Funds were available	1	2	3	4
Children entered school	1	2	3	4
Took new job	1	2	3	4
Moved to area	1	2	3	4
Lost job	1	2	3	4
Illness or accident	1	2	3	4
Encouragement from others	1	2	3	4
Family or marital changes	1	2	3	4
Job dissatisfaction	1	2	3	4
Other _____	1	2	3	4

Q-5 When you first enrolled in Continuing Education at Ohio State, what were your educational plans? *(Circle number of the one best response)*

1 I planned to take just one or a few courses at Ohio State but had no degree plans.
2 I thought that I might transfer into a bachelor's degree program, depending upon how college was going for me.
3 I planned to transfer into a degree program and earn a bachelor's degree.
4 I expected to take some required prerequisites and apply for admission to the Graduate School or a professional school.
5 I planned to take courses to transfer to another college/university
6 Other_____

Have your plans changed?

1 Yes
2 No

→ If yes, in what ways? _____

_____

_____

Q-6 How many courses do you prefer to take during a quarter? *(Circle one number)*

1 One
2 Two
3 Three
4 Four or more
5 Other_____

Q-7 What course schedule do you most prefer? *(Circle one number)*

1 Morning classes
2 Classes offered over the noon hour
3 Afternoon classes
4 Evening classes
5 Weekend classes
6 No preference

Q-8 How frequently do you prefer your classes to meet? *(Circle one)*

1 Once weekly
2 Twice weekly
3 3 or 4 times weekly
4 5 times weekly
5 No preference

Q-9 Continuing Education offers a variety of programs and services, including those listed below. Please indicate how satisfied you are with those programs or services that you have used. Were you very dissatisfied (1), somewhat dissatisfied (2), somewhat satisfied (3), very satisfied (4), or is the item not applicable (NA)?

How satisfied are you? *(Circle your answer)*

	Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Didn't Use
Academic advising:					
Availability	1	2	3	4	NA
Quality	1	2	3	4	NA
Information Center	1	2	3	4	NA
Math Excellence Program	1	2	3	4	NA
CE Minority Program:					
MCEOP	1	2	3	4	NA
Autumn open house	1	2	3	4	NA
Newsletter	1	2	3	4	NA
Student meetings	1	2	3	4	NA
Academic advising	1	2	3	4	NA
Orientation program	1	2	3	4	NA
Transition Program	1	2	3	4	NA
Bridge Program:					
Newsletter	1	2	3	4	NA
Course selection	1	2	3	4	NA
Academic advising	1	2	3	4	NA
DISCOVER:					
Availability	1	2	3	4	NA
Usefulness	1	2	3	4	NA

Q-10 The next statements pertain to your experience with Continuing Education at Ohio State. For each statement, please indicate whether you strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3), or strongly agree (4). Circle not applicable (NA) if the item does not apply to you.

Extent of agreement *(Circle your answer)*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	NA
I have been satisfied with the counseling I have received from Continuing Education	1	2	3	4	NA
Written information I have received from Continuing Education has not been helpful.	1	2	3	4	NA
I like Continuing Education's counseling appointment schedule.	1	2	3	4	NA
I would recommend Continuing Education to a friend thinking about returning to school.	1	2	3	4	NA
Continuing Education staff members were not able to help me get answers to my questions.	1	2	3	4	NA
I have received the help I needed from Continuing Education to enroll.	1	2	3	4	NA
Continuing Education staff are very familiar with Ohio State policies and procedures.	1	2	3	4	NA
Continuing Education staff at the front reception desk have been helpful to me.	1	2	3	4	NA
Continuing Education's office is open at convenient times.	1	2	3	4	NA
The West Campus location of Continuing Education is convenient.	1	2	3	4	NA
The advice I have received from Continuing Education staff was correct.	1	2	3	4	NA
Most of the time I am able to reach the Continuing Education office by telephone when I call.	1	2	3	4	NA
I get the feeling that Continuing Education staff members do not care about me as a person.	1	2	3	4	NA

Q-11 [redacted] there been two quarters in a row when you did not take courses?

1 No ——————> Skip to Q-13
2 Yes

Q-12 (If yes to Q-11 above.) Many different factors may influence students to leave school temporarily or permanently. We would like to know which of these factors influenced you to "stop out" or drop out since you began attending as a Continuing Education student. (Circle numbers of all that apply)

1 Financial problems
2 Job responsibilities
3 Courses too difficult
4 Lack of family support
5 Family/home responsibilities
6 Did not like studying
7 Too few other adult students
8 Large size of Ohio State
9 Lack of evening courses
10 Inconvenient evening course schedule
11 Lack of weekend courses
12 Couldn't get courses desired
13 Illness
14 Personal problems
15 Teaching quality poor
16 Time problems
17 Accomplished goal
18 Problems transferring credits to Ohio State
19 Other_____

Which three of the above factors were most important in influencing your decision to "stop out" or drop out? (Put number of factor in box.)

☐ MOST IMPORTANT
☐ SECOND MOST IMPORTANT
☐ THIRD MOST IMPORTANT

Q-13 Are there any ways in which Continuing Education can serve you better?

_____

_____

_____

Q-14 What is your greatest complaint about Ohio State?

_____

_____

Q-15 What do you like best about Ohio State?

_____

_____

The following questions will provide us with some background information about you.

Q-16 Are you employed for pay?

1 Yes
2 No ——————> Skip to Q-17

(If employed) About how many hours weekly are you employed?

1 One to ten
2 Eleven to twenty
3 Twenty-one to thirty-five
4 Thirty-six or more

What is your position title?_____

Is your tuition partially or fully paid by your employer?

1 Yes
2 No

Q-17 What is your marital status?

1 Single (including divorced, separated, or widowed)
2 Married or living with a partner

Q-18 Do you have children under age 18 living at home with you?

1 Yes
2 No

Q-19 What was your educational level when you began taking courses through Continuing Education?

1 High school diploma or GED
2 Associate or technical degree
3 Some college, no degree
4 Bachelor's degree
5 Graduate coursework
6 Graduate or professional degree

APPENDIX B

Follow-up Postcard

May 11, 1992

Last week a questionnaire about Continuing Education at Ohio State was mailed to you. Your name was drawn in a random sample of current and former Continuing Education students.

If you have already completed and returned the questionnaire to us, please accept our thanks. If not, I hope that you will complete and return it today. Because it has been sent to only a small sample of students, it is very important that your responses be included in the study if the results are to accurately represent students' opinions.

If by some chance you did not receive the questionnaire, or it got misplaced, please call me right now at (614) 292-8860 and I will get another one in the mail to you today. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Anthony T. Basil
Director

T · H · E
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